

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
August 12, 2003

The meeting of the Maryland Commission on Human Relations was called to order on Tuesday, August 12, 2003 at 10:05 a.m., in Baltimore, Maryland.

PRESENT

Thomas Owen, Charles Cresswell, Barbara Dezmon, Peter Lee and Pamela Scarbro.

**APPROVAL OF THE
MINUTES
CHAIRPERSON'S
REPORT**

The minutes of the July meeting were accepted as written.

Chairperson Owen asked new Commissioners to introduce themselves. Chairperson Owen welcomed Commissioner Peter Lee and Commissioner Pamela Scarbro to the Commission.

Chairperson Owen informed Commissioners that the Executive Director was on vacation.

Commissioner Training

Chairperson Owen informed Commissioners that Commissioner training will take place in October in lieu of the meeting. The agency's programs will be discussed during the training.

**SUB-COMMITTEE
REPORTS**

Chairperson Owen informed Commissioners that one of the first items of business is to appoint Chairpersons for each of the Sub-Committees. If any Commissioner is interested in chairing one of the Sub-Committees please see Chairperson Owen.

**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Commissioners received copies of the Executive Director's Report (See attached). The Deputy Director welcomed the new Commissioners on behalf of the Executive Director and staff.

**DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S
REPORT
Case Processing Report**

Commissioners received copies of the Deputy Director's Report (See attached). The Deputy Director informed Commissioners that MCHR just completed the first month in this fiscal year. The Deputy Director reviewed his report for the new Commissioners.

Systemic Unit The General Counsel explained the agency's Systemic program.

Budget The Assistant Director informed Commissioners that the Governor's 7 ½ % funding reduction plan was passed by the Board of Public Works. The plan eliminated three of this agency's positions, two were vacant and one was filled.

Commissioner Dezmon inquired as to how the funding reduction plan would impact the services that the agency is contributing to the public. The Assistant Director stated that the decrease will take the agency to bare bones staffing minimum but would defer to the Deputy Director as to program impact.

The Deputy Director informed Commissioners that it's not just three positions this year; the agency lost five positions last year. In a year and a half the agency lost eight positions. The funding reduction plan is significant. One of the primary initiatives in case processing is lower time in processing. Every year as part of the agency's Strategic Plan an analysis is conducted of the staffing levels. The contractual obligations come first. One of the three positions was an investigator who investigated public accommodations cases; this will have an impact on time in processing.

GENERAL COUNSEL'S REPORT

Commissioners received copies of the General Counsel's report (See attached).

Hate Crimes Summit The General Counsel informed Commissioners that the Hate Crimes Summit would be held on Tuesday, October 14, 2003 at the Holiday Inn in Baltimore County. The Commission is one of the summit co-sponsors along with the Coalition Against Violence and Extremism (COVE). Additional information would be forthcoming.

Mediation Training The General Counsel informed Commissioners that in-house training was provided for the Mediators. Training was conducted on sexual orientation and genetic information for the Mediators.

Commissioners received a copy of an article involving a hate crime that was tried by one of the agency's attorneys. This case was a housing complaint in which an interracial couple living in Randallstown, suffered harassment by their new neighbor. The Office of Administrative Hearings found that the neighbor was in violation of Article 49B in his ongoing racial harassment of the couple. The judge fined the neighbor compensatory damages of \$5,000 for his actions. Monetary/compensatory damages can be awarded in housing cases.

Legislation
Senate Bill 479/
House Bill 808

The General Counsel would like the Commission to consider a remedies bill which has been submitted in Annapolis for approximately a decade. This legislation would change the remedies for employment, to make it equitable with housing law. The amount of the violation to be assessed against the violator would be based on the size of the employer. This would ensure that smaller employers would not be assessed the same as a larger employers. This bill was privately sponsored in the past by Senators and Delegates. MCHR supported this bill. The deadline for submission of departmental legislation for review and approval by the Governor's office is September 2, 2003. The General Counsel recommended that this bill be privately sponsored. If the bill is not privately sponsored it would be submitted as departmental legislation.

Commissioner Dezmon motioned that the General Counsel and appropriate staff pursue obtaining private sponsorship for the remedies legislation, if not privately sponsored then the bill should be submitted as departmental legislation. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Cresswell. Commissioners Lee and Scarbro abstained. Motion passed.

Commissioners received copies of a list of the members of the Health and Government Operations Committee and the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee.

Source of Income
Bill

The General Counsel informed Commissioners that the Source of Income bill would be submitted. This bill amends the housing law.

Community
Outreach/Education
Annual Report

The Public Affairs Coordinator informed Commissioners that the proof of the Annual Report would be available for Commissioner review during the October meeting. The Annual Report would be submitted to the Governor by January 1, 2004.

Commissioner Dezmon recommended that the Annual Report be reviewed by a panel prior to submission for Commissioners review. This panel should be comprised of Commissioner Owen and appropriate staff.

Commissioner Dezmon recommended conducting training of educational institutions and/or organizations as part of MCHR's outreach. This training should provide guidance and resources to first thru twelfth grade students. The Public Affairs Coordinator stated that the unit is exploring this matter.

NEW BUSINESS

Chairperson Owen would like Election of Officers placed on the agenda for the September meeting, if the Commission has a full complement.

Commission meeting was adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

Barbara Wilson